Pandharpur Yatra

The Land of Lord Vitthal



Pandharpur *is one of the most pious places in India revered with steeped devotion to Lord Sri Krishna, who is also locally known as "Vitthal" or "Vithoba". It is the spiritual capital of Maharashtra. Padma Purana and Skanda Purana describe that Lord Krishna came to Pandharpur in search of Rukmini Devi, when she became upset from Krishna while they were in Dwarka. Rukmini departed for the forest of Dindirvana, near Pandharpur.*

At Pandharpur, the most amazing pastime with Lord Krishna's great devotee Pundalik took place. Pundalik gave a brick 'Vit' to stand, and asked Lord to wait as he was serving his parents. As Lord stood, He kept His lotus hands on His hips, waiting for Pundarika to return. While He was waiting, Rukmini, having forgotten her distress, came from Dindirvana and re-joined Him. Both of Them stayed in Pandharpur in this deity form. To this day the Lord stands on the same brick with hands on hips, but now He's waiting for all His devotees to come see Him. The word "Vitthala" is derived from the Marathi word "Vit", meaning brick, and "thala" means standing. This is why Lord Krishna is called as "Vitthala" in Pandharpur. While waiting, the Lord seems to tell the devotees, "Do not fear. For those who have surrendered unto Me, I have reduced the depth of the ocean of material suffering. See, it is only this deep." Lord indicates the shallowness of the ocean by placing His hands on His hips.

Pundalik, in his previous life was the famous king Mucukunda, who is mentioned in Srimad-Bhagavatam to be blessed to sleep for long in a secluded cave. The brick given by Pundalik to Lord Krishna is not an ordinary brick, but King Indra himself. Long ago there was a demon named Vritrasura who was killed by Indra's trick. While dying the demon cursed him to become a brick. However, Indra was told that he will be expelled from this curse when Supreme Lord Krishna will stand on the brick. So Indra was forced to accept the brick body. As a brick, Indra had got good fortune of being in the house of Pundalik. It was this brick which Pundalik gave to Lord to stand on. As a result Indra was free from the curse. In Pandharpur, the Lord is worshipped as Sri Vitthala. His devotees also fondly call Him Vithobha or Panduranga. Sant Tukarama, a stalwart devotee of Lord Krishna always referred Pandharpur as "Bhu-Vaikuntha".

Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu *visited Pandharpur while on His journey through South India. He stayed here for 11 days. Sri Caitanya Caritamrta Madhya-lila chapter 9 verses 282–283 and 9.300-303 describe Lord Caitanya's visit to Pandharpur. Lord Caitanya's elder brother, Visvarupa, after he left Navadvipa lived in Pandharpur. Sri Caitanya Caritamrta Madhya-lila, Chapter 9, verses 282-283 and its purport describe: "From there Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu went to Pandarapura, where He happily saw the temple of Viththala Thakura." The city of Pandharpur is situated on the river Bhima. It is said that Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu initiated Tukarama when He visited Pandarapura, and thus Tukarama became His disciple. Tukarama Acarya became very famous in the Maharashtra province, and he spread the sankirtana movement all over the province. The sankirtana party belonging to Tukarama is still very popular in Bombay and throughout the province of Maharashtra. Tukarama's book is known as Abhanga. His sankirtana party exactly resembles the Gaudiya-Vaishnava sankirtana parties, for they chant the holy name of the Lord with mridanga and karatalas. In Pandharpur Lord Caitanya met Sri Ranga Puri, a godbrother of His spiritual master, Isvara Puri. They talked about Lord Krishna continuously for 5 to 7 days.*

Gopalpur *is a very important place to visit near Pandharpur and is non-different to Govardhana in Vraja. In this area, just on the banks of Chandrabhaga river is famous Vishnupad Temple. Vishnupad temple is in the middle of Chandrabhaga river and is assessable by a ramp. Vishnupad Temple bares the marks of footprints of Lord Krishna embedded on a stone slab along with the hoof prints of His beloved cows. In the middle of the river close-by is a small Narada Muni Temple. This Narada Muni Temple is the only temple in the world dedicated to Narada. Narada's temple is assessible by boat and is half sunk most of the time in the year with the streams of Chandrabhaga river. The whole area is in an exquisitely beautiful. Once Lord Krishna along with his cows came to visit Pandharpur. This past time is commemorated even today at Vishnupad Temple. Local devotees say that this place is Lord Krishna's eternal place of lunch pastime. Narada Muni's small temple demonstrates his every day's visit to witness this pastime! On the first day of Margashirsha month, Lord Vitthala's sandals are taken to Vishnupad temple. On the last day of the same month, Lord Vitthala's chariot is brought to the temple in a grand procession. Near Vishnupad temple is also the temple of Sant Jana Bhai, an adherent devotee of Lord Sri Krishna.*

Many prominent saints like Sant Tukarama, Sant Namdev, Sant Dnyaneshwar, Sant Eknath, Sant Janabai, Sant Sakhubai, Sant Gora Kumbhar, Sant Kanhopatra, Sant Satva Mali and others had spent many years of their life in service of their most beloved Lord Vitthala here in Pandharpur. There top-most unflinching devotion to Lord Krishna and their utmost dedication to His service had attracted Supreme Lord to personally appear in disguise and relish the transcendental loving exchanges!

- ***Sant Namdev*** *(1270-1350 AD) was a stalwart devotee of Lord Vitthal. He was born in the family of cloth merchant. From his early childhood he was deeply dedicated to unalloyed devotion to Lord Vitthal. He preached the mission of Harinam Sankirtan and devotion to Lord Krishna the prime objective of human life. He sang and wrote Abhanga, the devotional poetry in glorification of the Supreme Lord. Besides Maharashtra, he also travelled to provinces of Punjab to preach the glories of Lord Hari. Namdev's writings were also recognized by the Gurus of Sikhism and are included in the holy book of Sikhism, the Sri Guru Granth Sahib.*
- ***Sant Janabai*** *was born in 13th century at Parbhani, Maharashtra. When she was 7 years old, her parents visited Sri Vitthal temple in Pandharpur. As soon as Janabai had darshan of Sri Vitthal, she caught hold the lotus feet of Lord Vitthal and said to she won't return home, rather live in Pandharpur in service of Lord. Her parents persuaded,*

but she was adamant not to leave the lotus feet of Supreme Lord. Finally her parents relented and left her under the shelter of Lord Vitthal. After that, Sant Namdev came to have the darshan of Sri Vitthal, and saw this little girl crying at the lotus feet of Lord. Namdev took her to his home. Janabai requested Namdev that she would live as a maidservant at his house. Janabai's devotion to Lord Vitthal was so steeped and unalloyed that Supreme Lord Krishna came frequently in disguise to help her in household chores – grinding grains, picking cow dung cakes and even writing abhangas that she used to sing. Throughout the day, she would sing devotional songs abhangas in glorification of her beloved Sri Vitthal and simultaneously performed household chores. Association of saint Namdev was a great benediction for her. One day, Sant Dnyaneshwar and Sant Kabir came to Namdev's house. They also wanted to meet Janabai. When they came to see Janabai, she was engaged in a quarrel to a women over the ownership of cow dung cakes. The quarrel appeared like a mundane dispute. Both Sant Dnyaneshwar and Sant Kabir had earlier heard that Janabai was an unalloyed devotee of Lord, but were perplexed that she was engaged in an ordinary worldly quarrel. They asked Janabai, why is she quarrelling over a trivial matter. Janabai said that her cow dung cakes were special. They asked her, how were they special. She replied, when one put ears close to her cow dung cakes, they will hear 'Vitthal! Vitthal!'. They were took the cow dung cakes, and were astonished to hear 'Vitthal! Vitthal!' and see Janabai's devotion. Once when Lord came to grind grains, in rush He forgot his jewellery there and came to temple wearing Janabai's rug. Those who did not know Janabai's great qualities they blamed her for stealing and gave hang to death punishment. When they were just about to hang her, hanging rope turned into Sri Vitthal and everyone understood her greatness.

- ***Sant Eknath (1533 - 1599 AD)*** *was a staunch devotee of Lord Vitthal. He always glorified Lord Vitthal and performed humble devotional service for Supreme Lord's pleasure, irrespective of any impediments presented to him. On several occasions, pleased by unalloyed devotion of Eknath, Lord Vitthala personally came to him in disguise, and enacted wonderful pastimes with him. He was born in Paithan (56km from Aurangabad).*
- ***Sant Sakhubai*** *was a great devotee of Lord Vitthal. Her in-laws used to trouble her a lot. Once when she went to river to fetch water, she saw Varakari people going to Pandharpur, she also started going with them. Her husband and mother-in-law came to know about it. They beat her up and locked in a room tied to a pillar with a rope. Saviour of the devotees Lord personally took her to Pandharpur and tied Himself to the pillar instead. In Pandharpur, she took Panduranga's darshan and surrendered herself at His feet and she gave up life. When Varakari returned, they told this story to mother-in-law. Hearing this she went inside the room and she saw Lord was in the form of Sakhu. Everyone was surprised to see that. Mother Rukmini made Sakhu alive again and sent her back to village. Seeing Lord Saku placed her head at His feet and streams tears started rolling from her eyes while she was saying to Lord, because of me You had to go through so much trouble. For the devotee Lord gave darshan to all.*
- ***Sant Gora Kumbhar*** *was born in Goraba Ter village in Osmanabad district of Maharashtra State. He was potter by profession. He was always absorbed in singing bhajans glorifying Lord Vitthal and chanting the name of Pandurang (Lord Vitthal) even while working. They had only one child whom they named as Vitthal. Once, his wife left her child in the courtyard where Gora Kumbhar was working and went to bring water. Gora Kumbhar was busy in preparing the mud required to make the earthen pots and was as usual engrossed in singing bhajans of Pandurang. His child playing near him, fell in the shallow ditch where the mud for preparing the pots was laid. Gora Kumbhar was churning the mud with his feet. While doing so, he accidentally crushed his child under his feet. He was so engrossed in singing the bhajans of Pandurang that he didn't even hear the cries of his child. On returning back, his wife started searching for the child. As she was unable to find it, she went to Gora Kumbhar to inquire about their child. There,*

her eyes fell on the churned mud, which had become red with blood. She realised that her child had been crushed under the mud. She started wailing in grief. As an atonement of this mistake, Gora Kumbhar broke off both his hands. Due to this, his pottery business suffered a setback.

Thereafter, Lord Vitthal and Rukmani came in disguise as labourers and started living in his house. As a result, his business started to flourish again. After a few days, on the auspicious day of Ashadhi Ekadashi, the famous saints, both Vitthal and Rukmini in disguise as laborers expressed desire to visit Pandharpur. Gora Kumbhar and his wife decided to accompany them. As they reached Pandharpur, they saw Sant Namdev performing kirtan at a place. All the other devotees were singing with him. Gora Kumbhar and his wife also sat down to join the kirtan. During the kirtan, people raised their hands and started clapping and singing praise of Lord Vitthal. Even Gora Kumbhar instinctively raised his broken arms in the air. To everyone's surprise, hands sprung up from his broken arms. Everyone was glad to see this and they all sung praise of Lord Pandurang. Gora Kumbhar and his wife immediately went to Sri Vitthal temple take darshans and express their gratitude for Lord's unfathomable mercy on them. Then, as they were taking darshan of Lord Vitthal, same labourers who served them appeared from the deity. Gora Kumbhar and his wife realized that it was Supreme Lord Vitthal and Rukmini who'd come in disguise. Gora Kumbhar and his wife repented for taking serve from them. Pleased by great devotion of Gora Kumbhar and his wife, Rukmini returned there only child to them, who got crushed while Gora Kumbhar was absorbed in samadhi of singing bhajans.

- ***Sant Kanhopatra** was a daughter of a rich prostitute and courtesan named Shyama, who lived in the town of Mangalvedhe, near Pandharpur. Shama was uncertain about the identity of Kanhopatra's father, but suspected that it was the town's head-man Sadashiva Malagujar. Kanhopatra spent her childhood in the palatial house of her mother, served by several maids, but because of her mother's profession, Kanhopatra's social status was de-meaningly low. Kanhopatra was trained in dance from early childhood so that she could join her mother's profession. She became a talented dancer and singer, and was extremely beautiful. Shama suggested that Kanhopatra visit the Badshah (Muslim king), who will adore her beauty and gift her money and jewellery, but Kanhopatra flatly refused. Shama wanted Kanhopatra to marry, but Kanhopatra longed to marry a man who was more beautiful than her. Sadashiva Malagujar, Kanhopatra's supposed father, heard of Kanhopatra's beauty and wished to see her dance, but Kanhopatra refused. Accordingly Sadashiva started to harass Kanhopatra and Shama. Shama tried to convince him that he was the father of Kanhopatra and thus should spare them, but Sadashiva did not believe her. As he continued his harassment, Shama's wealth slowly depleted. Eventually, Shama apologised to Sadashiva and offered to present Kanhopatra to him. Kanhopatra, however, fled to Pandharpur disguised as a maid, with the help of her aged maid Hausa. When Kanhopatra first saw the Sri Vitthala of Pandharpur, she sang in an abhanga to express her gratefulness and praise the Supreme Lord that she was blessed to have seen Vithoba's feet. She had found the unparalleled beauty she sought in her groom in Vithoba. She withdrew from the society and moved into a hut in Pandharpur with Hausa and lived an ascetic's life. She sang and danced at the Vithoba temple, and cleaned it twice a day. She gained the respect of the people, who believed her to be a poor farmer's daughter maddened by the love of Vithoba. During this same time, however, Sadashiva, who felt insulted by Kanhopatra's refusal, sought the help of the Badshah (Muslim king) of Bidar. Hearing tales of Kanhopatra's beauty, the Badshah ordered her to be his concubine. When she refused, the king sent his men to get her by force. Kanhopatra took refuge in the Vitthala's temple. The soldiers of the king besieged the temple and threatened to destroy it if Kanhopatra was not handed over to them. Kanhopatra requested a last meeting with Vithoba before being taken. Kanhopatra then took the shelter of the lotus feet of Sri Vitthal. Deeply absorbed in pangs from Supreme*

Lord, she left her body at the lotus feet of Sri Vitthala. As per her last wishes, her body was buried near the southern part of the temple. From this spot, a tarati tree has arose, to which devotees offer obeisances the remembrance of her devotion to Lord Vitthal.

Dindi Procession: The most outstanding display of the Maharashtrians' devotion to Lord Vitthala is the Dindi Yatra, a pilgrimage on foot that culminates in Pandharpur. It has been performed annually for the last 700 years. Dindi Yatra, the huge Asadhi Ekadasi festival (July) draws a crowd of 700,000 people. As many as 200,000 pilgrims come on foot. The festival falls during the month of Asadha (July) and marks the beginning of Caturmasya, the four months of the rainy season. Many of the pilgrims are Varkaris. The Varkaris form well-organized and disciplined processions which start off from the birth-sites and samadhi places of various saints and converge in Pandharpur. The pilgrims travel 150 to 300 kilometres, depending on where they start. The biggest of all Dindis is that of Dnyaneshwar, which forms a gigantic procession. It originates in Alandi, near Pune, and covers about 250 kilometres in an eighteen-day walk. Some of the smaller groups are on the road for about a month. The men on the procession, dressed alike in white dhotis, kurtas, and typical Gandhi hats, walk in lines of six or seven abreast. They beat small brass cymbals, called tal, in such a perfect rhythm that even when several hundred play, it sounds like one person alone. In the front, several men carry saffron flags. Next, a group of men on each Dindi carry a decorated palanquin (palaki) bearing symbolic footprints (padukas) of the saint they follow. The leader of the group walks at the back, playing the vina, accompanied by one or more drum players. Behind the men follow the women, dressed in bright colourful saris. Some carry tulasi plants in decorated pots on their heads. Others carry pots with water to serve their fellow varkaris. Fifty to five hundred people walk in each Dindi group. Responding heartily to their kirtana leaders, they sing the mantras jaya jaya vithobha rukhumai! jaya jaya vithobha rukumai! and jaya hari vitthala, interspersed with lively songs glorifying Lord Vitthala. Day after day, undaunted by heat or rain, the pilgrims fill the air with tumultuous chanting. Sometimes they dance and sometimes run, rushing ecstatically towards Pandharpur and their Lord.

ISKCON Pandharpur: At Pandharpur, ISKCON has a beautiful Temple located amidst lush agricultural fields and on the banks of Candrabhaga river. Their Lordships Sri Sri Radha Pandharinath are the presiding deities. Temple has Guesthouse facility, Matchless gift shop, Goshala and footprints of Lord Caitanya, Lord Nityananda and Visvarupa. On the temple premises there is Srila Prabhupada ghat constructed by ISKCON for the convenience of pilgrims to easily commute across the Candrabhaga river. In the month of Asadha (July), ISKCON Pandharpur temple does major contribution in distributing Prasadam to the pilgrims coming for Dindi procession. ISKCON Pandharpur also conducts Pandharpur Dhama parikrama.

In the ancient times, Pandharpur was known by two names: 1. Dindiravana, meaning the forest of Dindirava and 2. Lohadanda kshetra, meaning the land of iron club.

Lord Nityananda also visited Pandharpur and met Laksmipati here as described in Sri Bhakti-ratnakara 5.2241-2328 by Narahari Chakravarti Thakur.

Pandharpur is 400 km southeast of Mumbai and 216 km (4 hours' drive) from Pune in the Solapur district.

Places to visit in and around Pandharpur

1. Temple of Lord Vitthala and Namdev Payari (Namdev's steps)
2. Taak Pithe Vithoba Temple
3. Vishnupad Temple - Footprint of Lord Krishna and Cows
4. Narada Muni Temple

5. Gopalpur Temple
6. Pundalika Temple and Chandrabhaga River
7. ISKCON Pandharpur
8. Lohadanda Tirtha
9. Lord Ram Temple
10. Sri Krishna Temple on the way to main Lord Vitthala Temple
11. Sri Dwarkadisha Temple



Sri Vitthala at Pandharpur

Pastime of Lord Krishna's coming to Pandharpur to meet Pundalik

The *Padma Purana* and *Skanda Purana* briefly describe why the Lord Krishna journeyed to Pandharpur and why He stays there in this form. Once Srimati Radharani, Lord Krishna's consort, visited Dwarka, where Lord Krishna lived. At that time, Rukmini Devi, Lord Krishna's principal queen, noticed that Krishna was dealing more intimately with Radharani than He had ever done with her. Upset, she departed for the forest of Dindirvana, near Pandharpur. Lord Krishna followed Rukmini to apologize, but His apology left her unmoved. So the Lord moved on to Pandharpur to visit one of His devotee, Bhakta Pundalik. Pundalik in his young age never looked after the needs of his father Janudev and mother Satyavati. Both Janudev and Satyavati were great devotees of Lord Krishna. When Pundalik got married, he started ill-treating them all the more. Tired of his tyranny, the parents decided to head for Kashi / Varanasi. It is said that those who die in Kashi attain salvation and liberation from the cycle of birth and death. Hearing his parents' plans,

Pundalik and his wife decided to join them. His treachery continued so much that he made his old parents walk throughout the journey while he and his young wife rode on a horse.

On the way, they came across the hermitage of the great sage, Kakkut muni. Tired of the long journey, the group decided to spend some days there. That night, Pundalik lay awake and witnessed something remarkable. Just before dawn, he saw a group of beautiful, young women dressed in dirty clothes, enter the Sage's hermitage. They did chores like cleaning the floor, fetching water and washing the Sage's clothes. After that, they went to the prayer room. When they came out, their clothes were spotlessly clean and they disappeared. Pundalik wasn't alarmed seeing this but rather he felt at peace. He kept thinking about the incident the following day. He wanted to be sure that he was not dreaming but had truly witnessed such a glorious incident. So he remained awake again. But this time, he got closer and decided to speak to the women.

"Who are you all?" "We are Ganga, Yamuna and all the holy rivers of India. People take a dip and bathe in us to wipe away their sins. The impurity of their mind, body and souls make us dirty. That's why you see our clothes in such filthy condition." Pundalik was amazed with their answer. "But you are the biggest sinner of all because of the way you treat your devotee parents." This was a rude awakening for Pundalik. He realized his mistake and changed his ways. He served his parents well and looked after all their needs and comforts. Seeing Pundalik's sincere devotion and service towards his parents, Lord Krishna was extremely pleased.

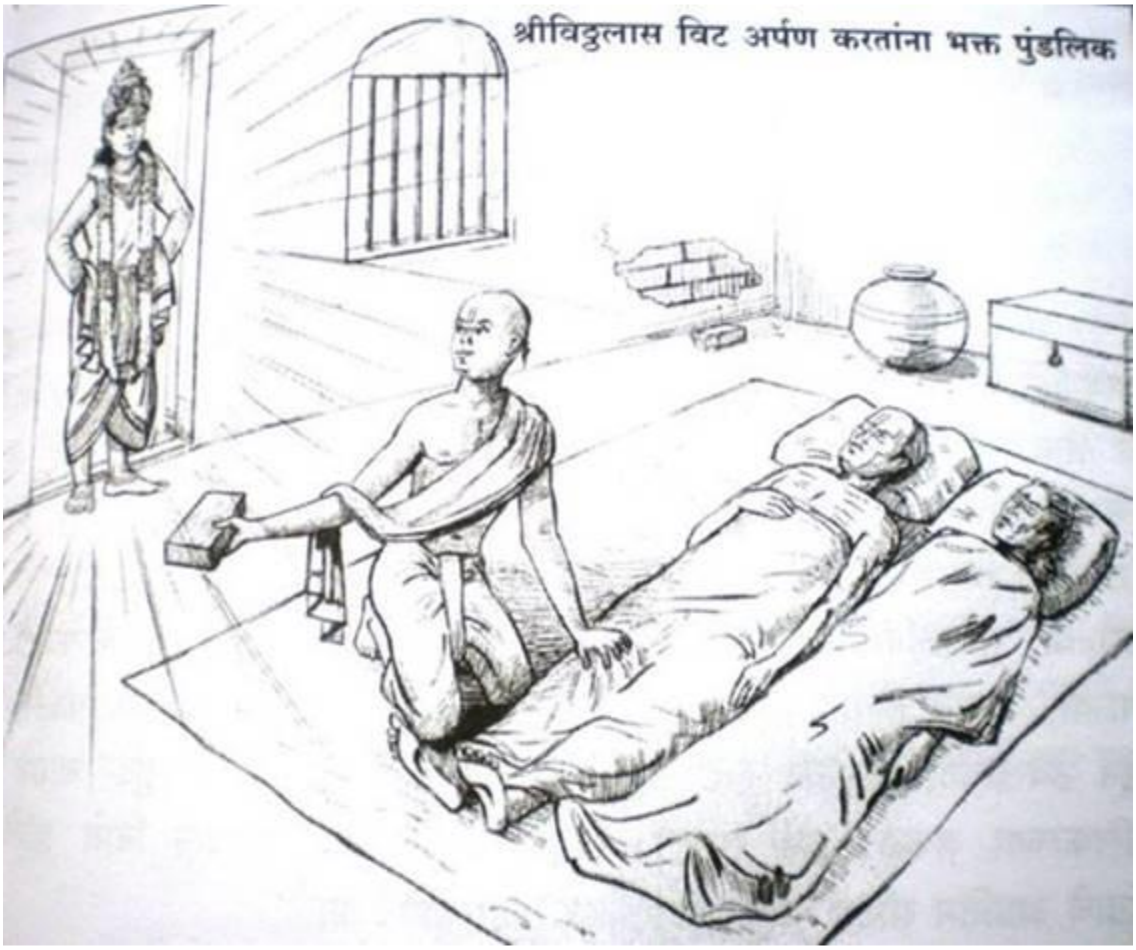
When the Lord Krishna reached Pundarika's *asrama* in Pandharpur, Pundarika was serving his elderly parents. So Pundarika gave the Lord a seat of brick and asked the Lord to wait. The Lord did as told. As Lord stood, He kept His lotus hands on His hips, waiting for Pundarika to return. While He was waiting, Rukmini, having forgotten her distress, came from Dindirvana and re-joined Him. Both of Them stayed in Pandharpur in deity form. To this day the Lord stands on the same brick, but now He's waiting for all His devotees to come see Him. *The word "Vitthala" is derived from the Marathi word "Vit", meaning brick, and "Thala" means standing. This is why Lord Krishna is called as "Vitthala" in Pandharpur.* While waiting, the Lord seems to tell the devotees, *"Do not fear. For those who have surrendered unto Me, I have reduced the depth of the ocean of material suffering. See, it is only this deep." Lord indicates the shallowness of the ocean by placing His hands on His hips.*

Elegantly dressed in yellow and other colours, Lord Vitthala wears around His neck a *vaijayanti* garland and *tulasi*, whose aroma permeates the *darsana* hall and the surrounding area. His right hand holds a lotus flower and His left a conch shell. On His chest He bears the mark of Bhrgu's foot. His ears are decorated with shark-shaped earrings, and on His forehead beneath His crown is a broad mark of *tilaka*. The Lord's smile irresistibly enchants His devotees. Each pilgrim who approaches Him gets a glimpse of His peaceful smiling face and considers this the perfection of life.

[Reference: Bhu-Vaikuntha Pandharpur book by His Holiness Lokanath Swami]



Lord Krishna comes in search for Rukmini in Dindirvan



Pundalika offers Lord Krishna a brick to wait upon

Pundalik Temple is about ½ a kilometre from the Vitthala Temple. This temple marks the spot where Pundalika, the Lord’s devotee, spent the last years of his life, and also is place of his Samadhi. It is on the riverbank of Chandrabhaga.



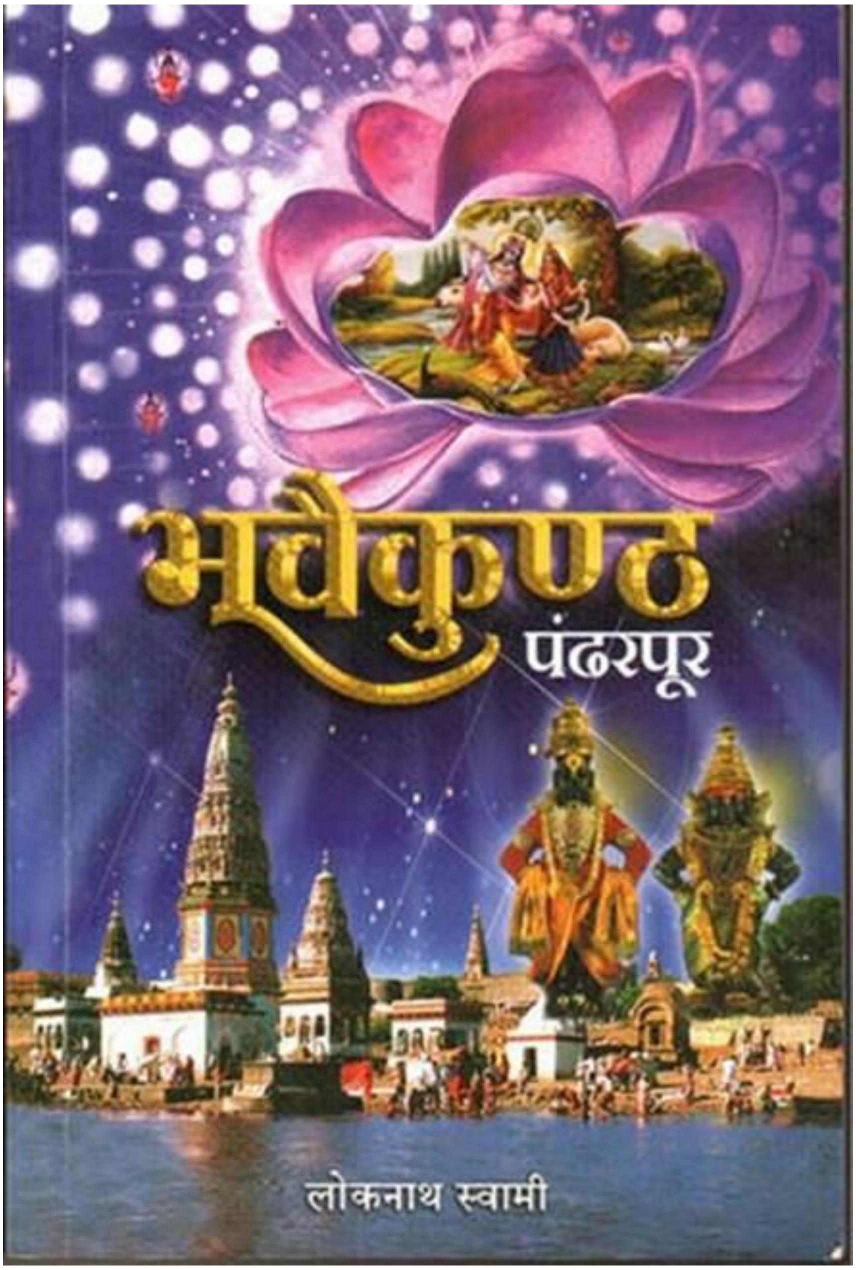
Pundalik Temple

Who was Pundalik in his last life? Pundalik was the famous king Mucukunda who is mentioned in *Srimad-Bhagavatam* to be blessed to sleep for long in a secluded cave. The story illustrates further how Lord Krishna very expertly arranged the killing of Kalayavana and also blessed Mucukunda. The same Mucukunda was reborn again as Pundalika. (Ref: Bhu-Vaikuntha Pandharpur, page 46). For more details of Pundalika's last life as King Mucukundas read on: http://vedabase.com/en/kb/51



Deity of Pundalik at his temple

The story of brick – Vitt: Lord Siva told Parvati, *"The brick given by Pundalik to Lord Krishna is not an ordinary brick, but King Indra himself. Long ago there was a demon named Vritrasura who was killed by Indra's trick. While dying the demon cursed him to become a brick. However, Indra was told that he will be expelled from this curse when Supreme Lord Krishna will stand on the brick. So Indra was forced to accept the brick body. As a brick Indra had got good fortune of being in the house of Pundalik. It was this brick which Pundalik gave to Lord to stand on. As a result Indra was free from the curse."*



'Bhu Vaikuntha Pandharpur' book by His Holiness Lokanath Swami Maharaj

1. Temple of Lord Vitthala

Sri Vitthala Temple is situated at the centre of Pandharpur. Main entrance is the eastern one known as Maha dwar which is also called as *Namdev Payari*. The first step of the temple, known as *Namdev Payari* is built up over the place where the great saint, Namdev took *samadhi* at his desire. After Namdev Payari there are three small rooms called *Mukti Mandap*. After crossing the *Mukti Mandap* there is a quadrangle of about 120' x 60' with wooden pillars, presently called as *Vitthal Sabha Mandap*. In this shrine is Sri Vitthala which attracts millions of devotees every year. Sri Vitthala is called by different names *Vithoba, Pandurang, Pandhari, Vithalnath* etc. Behind Vitthala temple in the north east corner of the temple, facing east is the temple of Rukmini, the consort of Vitthala. On the way out of the *darsana* hall, one sees hanging from the ceiling the famous eight prayers known as *Pandurangastakam*, composed by the acarya Sankaracarya during his visit to Pandharpur in the 8th century. Each verse glorifies the beauty, qualities, and devotees of the Lord and ends with the refrain *para-brahma-lingam bhaje pandurangam*, meaning "*I worship the supreme spiritual form of Lord Panduranga.*"

***Namdev Payari*:** Saint Namdev prayed to Lord Vitthal, *"O Lord, I do not want Vaikuntha, but only aspire to get dust from feet of all devotees who visit you. I wish to become the steps on your doorway."* In answer to his prayers Lord Vitthala arranged for the ground near the steps to part. Saint Namdev with his whole family entered into the ground. This step is even today visible on the main front door of Lord Vitthal's temple and is called as

Namdev Payari. This incident happened in 1238, *ashdh vadya trayodashi (Marathi calendar)*. It is a unique tradition in Pandharpur that everyone can go up to the altar and touch the lotus feet of Sri Vitthala. Some pilgrims even rest their heads upon His feet. But one has to move on quickly.

Live darshans of Sri Vitthala and Rukmani Devi can be had on Temple's website:
http://www.vitthalrukminimandir.org/English/onlineDarshan.html



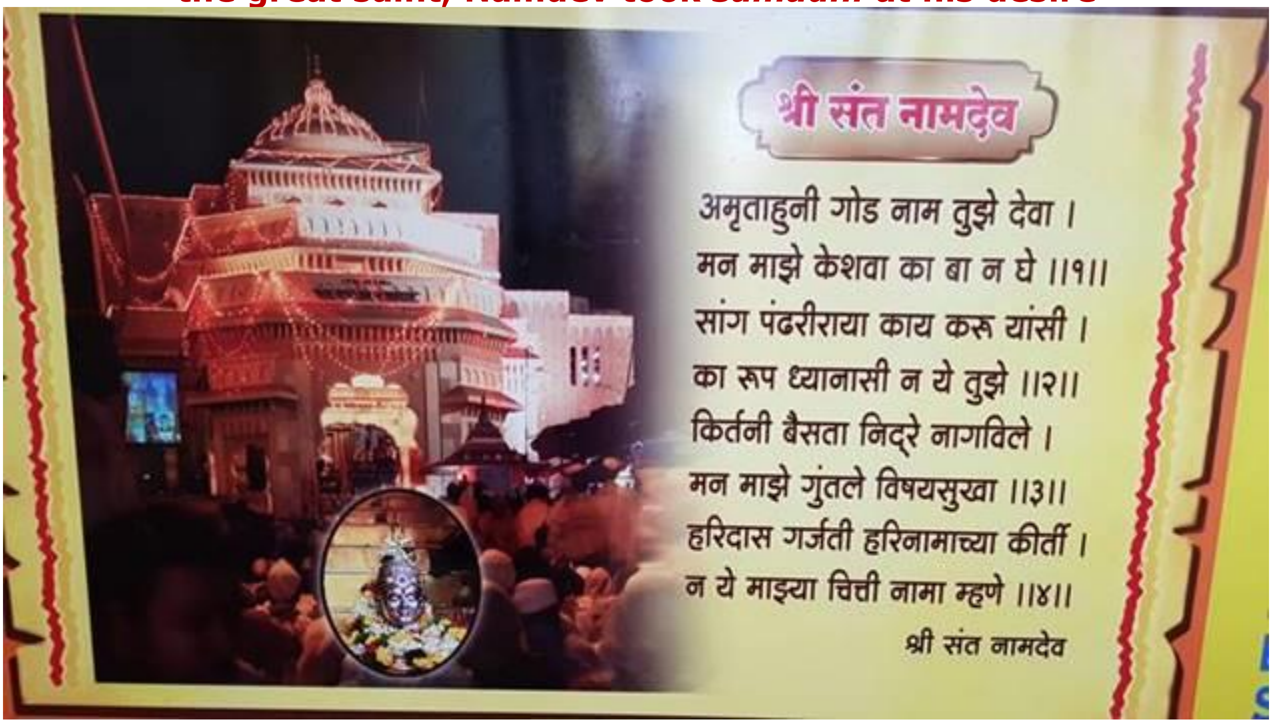
Sri Pandharpur Dhama



Main entrance is the eastern one known as Maha dwar which is also called as *Namdev Payari*



First step of temple, known as *Namdev Payari* is built up over the place where the great saint, Namdev took *samadhi* at his desire



Sweeter than nectar is Your name Oh Lord |

My mind is Keshava, then why can’t I see You ||1||

Oh Lord of Pandurang– Please tell me what do I do with this one (my mind) ||2||

Why can’t I see Your image in my mind |

When I sit to sing Your glories I feel sleepy |

My mind is engaged in materialistic pleasure ||3||

Your devotees are singing Your names glories loudly |

You are not coming to my mind. Nama says ||4||

--Saint Namdev



Inside Sri Vitthala Temple at Pandharpur



Sri Vitthala at Pandharpur



Sri Vitthala at Pandharpur



Sri Vitthala at Pandharpur

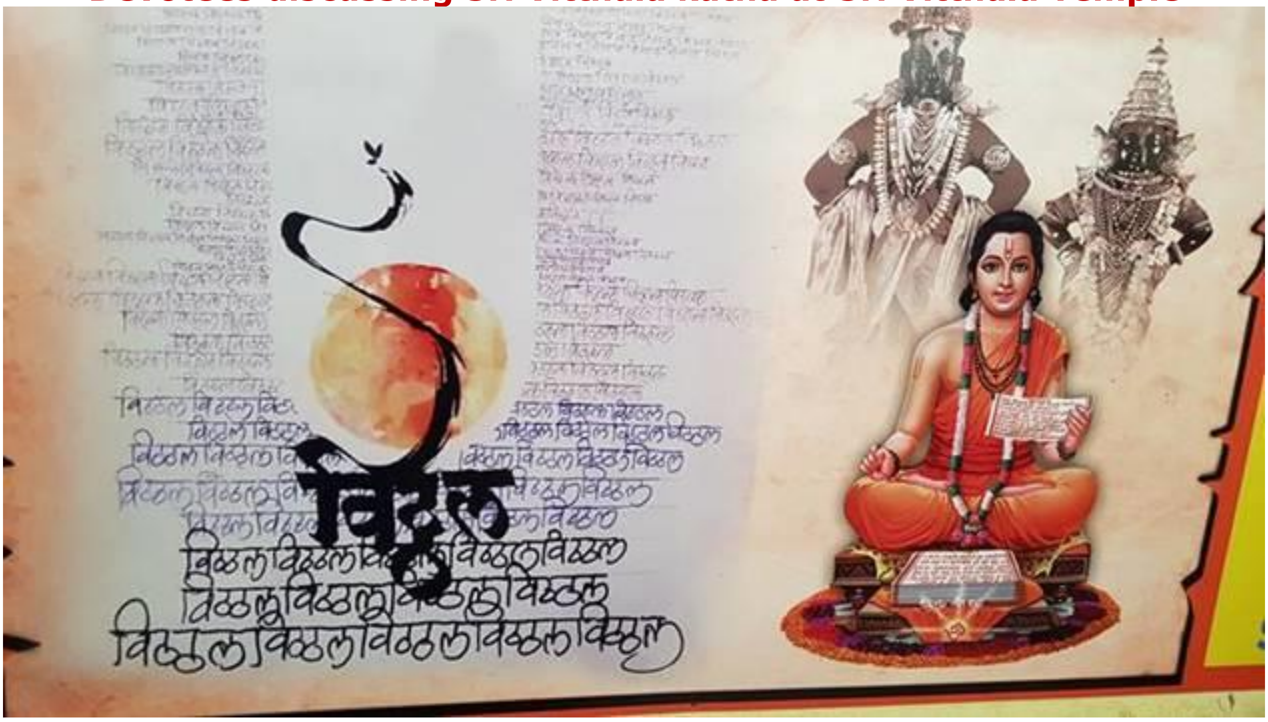

Sri Rukmini Ji at Sri Vitthala Temple in Pandharpur



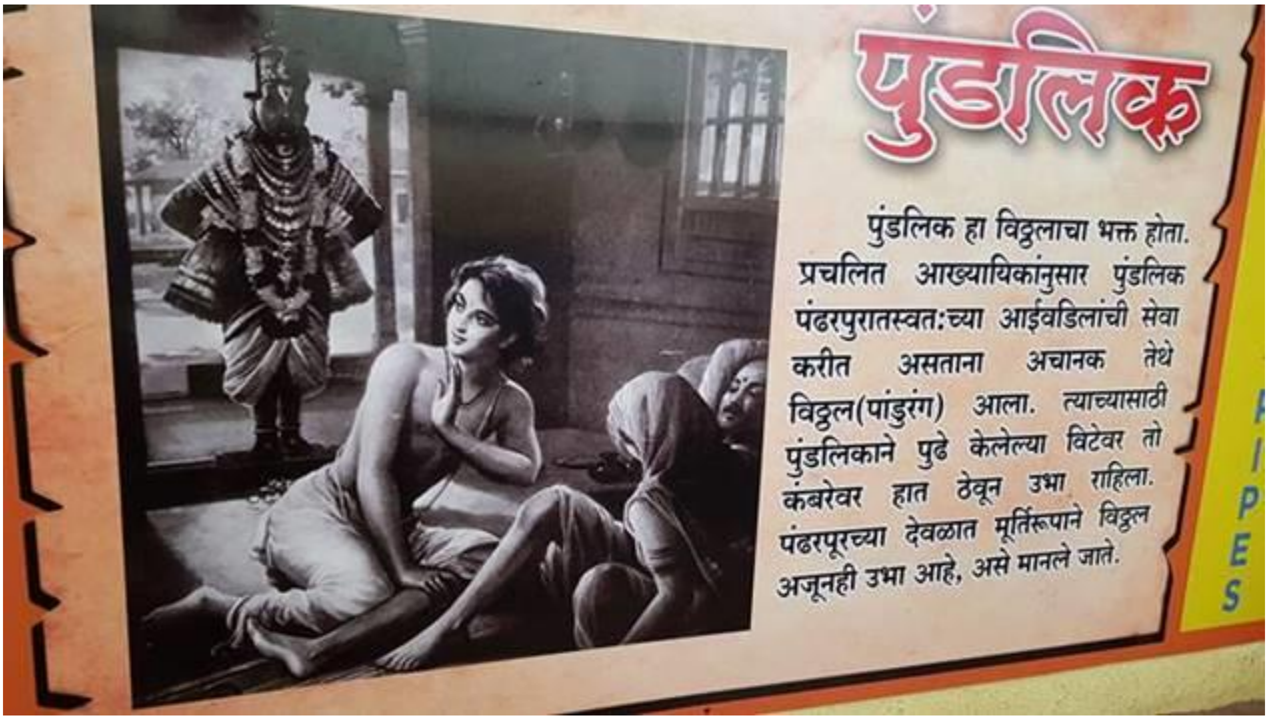
Shrine of Sri Rukmini Ji at Sri Vitthala Temple in Pandharpur



Devotees discussing Sri Vitthala katha at Sri Vitthala Temple



Sant Dnyaneshwar

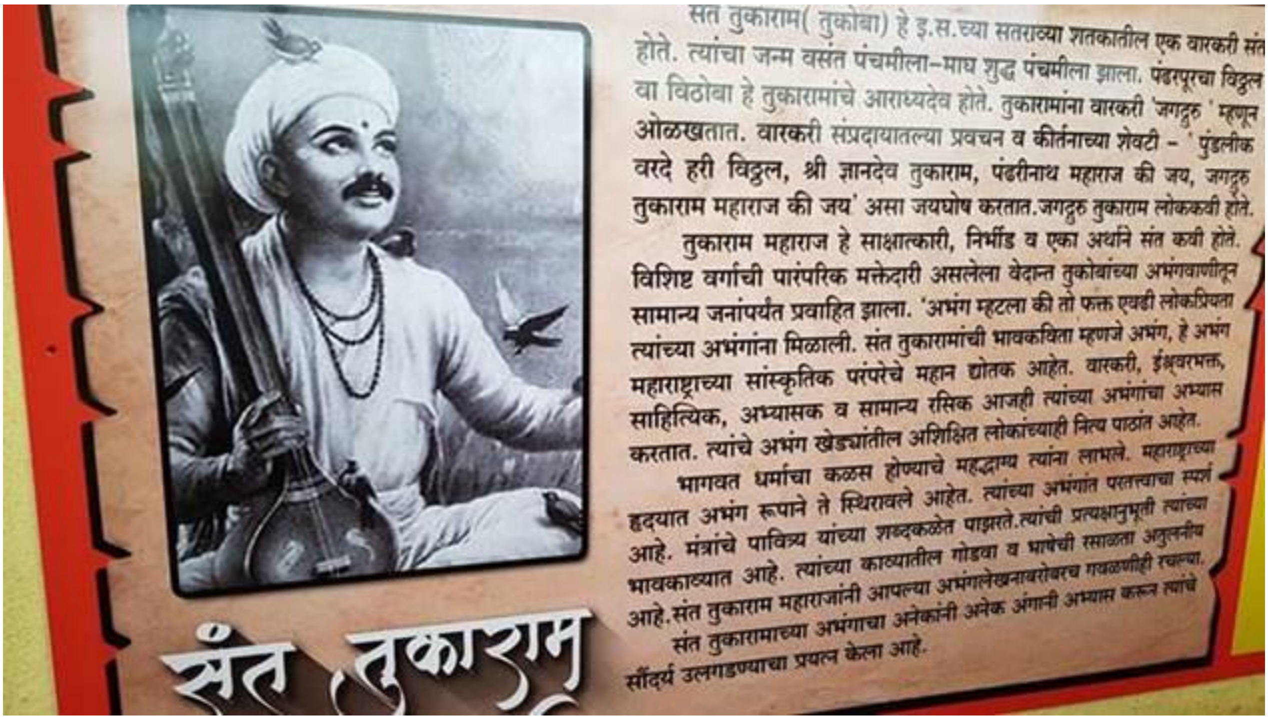


Pundalik



Sant Dnyaneshwar's Palanquin,

that Varkaris carry in a grand procession chanting the glories of Sri Vitthala, walking all the way from Alandi near Pune to Pandharpur every year during Asadhi Ekadasi festival (July)



Sant Tukaram



Sant Namdev stamp issued by Government of India in honour of this great saint



Sant Tukaram stamp issued by Government of India in honour of this great saint



Sant Tukaram's Palanquin

that Varkaris carry in a grand procession chanting the glories of Sri Vitthala, walking all the way from Dehugaon near Pune to Pandharpur every year during Asadhi Ekadasi festival (July)



Sant Namdev

In Varakari sampradaya, amongst all saints the most loving saint to Lord Pandhari and in Varakari sampradaya's history the one who must be known that is Saint Namdev. He was born on auspicious moment of Kartik suddha Ekadasi in Lord's place Pandharpur. His father Damusheti and mother Gonai, were both devotees of Sri Vithhal. He lived in Narasi Bamani village of Marathwada. Namdev's father had family business of clothing, therefore once he had to go out of town that time Namdev was six years old. While leaving the town he assigned Namdev the responsibility of daily bhoga offering service to Lord Pandurang. Namdev went inside the temple and started speaking with Lord. Requesting Lord to eat offerings, or else I will smash my head in front of you he said.

It's not an ordinary act of saint |
The offerings were eaten by deity |

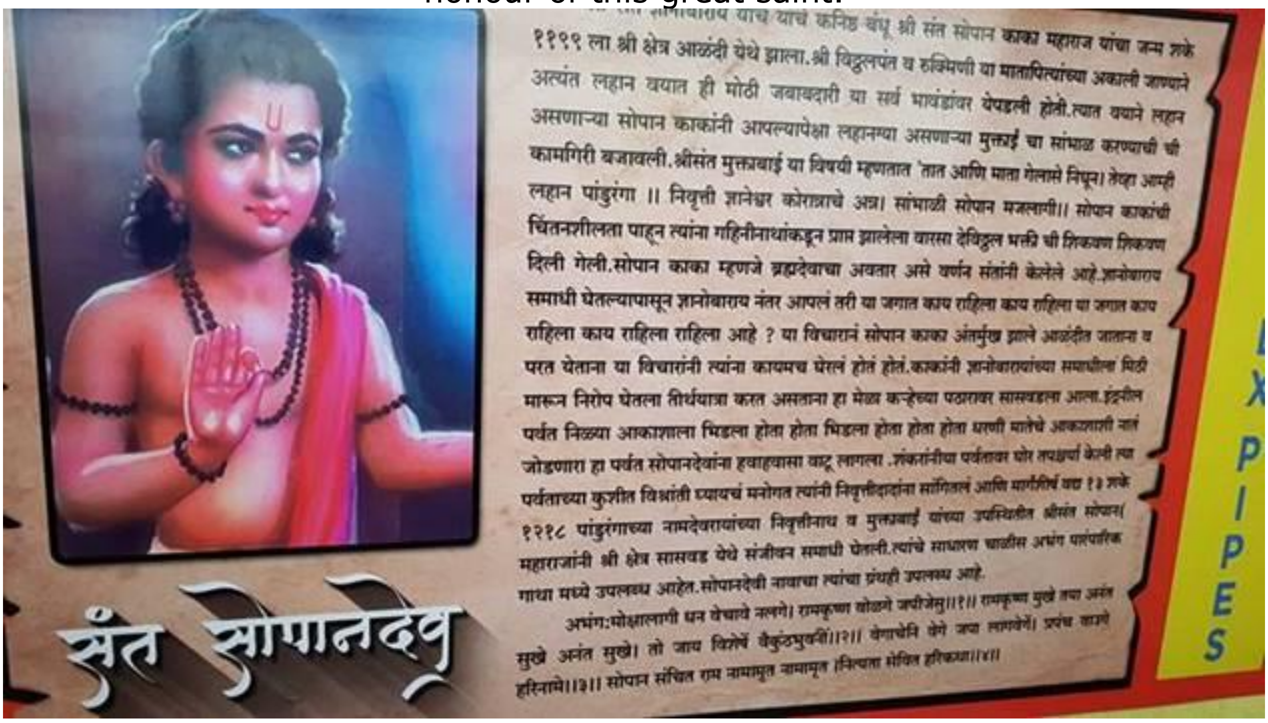
This way Pandurang personally eat offerings from the hands of Namdev. In another pastime, to remove misunderstandings of Parisa Bhagavat, Namdev created many Paris (touchstone that turns iron to Gold) from the banks for Chandrabhaga. He turned Janabai

into a saint who came as maid servant just by his devotional teachings of Lord Vitthal. Up to Punjab, he preached Bhagavat dharma. Even today within Sikh community in Guru Granth Sahib, his abhangs are included. And at the end on Aashad vadya-trayovashi at Pandharpur mahadwar with Saint Janabai and other 14 family members he took Samadhi while living in the body.



Sant Eknath (1533 - 1599 AD)

was a staunch devotee of Lord Vitthal. He always glorified Lord Vitthal and performed humble devotional service for Supreme Lord's pleasure, irrespective of any impediments presented to him. On several occasions, pleased by unalloyed devotion of Eknath, Lord Vitthala personally came to him in disguise, and enacted wonderful pastimes with him. He was born in Paithan (56km from Aurangabad). Government of India issued a stamp in honour of this great saint.



Sant Sopandev

was younger brother of Saint Dnyaneshwar. He was born in 1199 at Sri Kshetra Alandi. Due to early death of parents, all the children had to take up big responsibility. Sopan took responsibility to look after his younger sister Muktai.



Sant Sakubai



Saint Gora Kumbhar



Saint Changdev

was famous as a great Yogi during Saint Dnyaneshwar time. Due to his yogic capability he achieved many *siddhi's* (powers). Using these powers he increased his life up to 1400 years. Even having all this, he never was blessed by guru. He had heard Dnyaneshwar Maharaj's glories and wrote a letter. As Dnyaneshwar was younger to him but superior by virtue, doubts raised in him to what he can write, therefore he sent a blank letter. Dnyaneshwar answered back with 65 verses. After this Changdev felt strong desire to meet Dnyaneshwar. He rode on a live tiger to meet Dnyaneshwar. He had snake in his hand. When the news reached Dnyaneshwar, he immediately came to receive Changdev riding on the wall (as a vehicle) that he was sitting on and thus broke Changdev's pride. Later on Muktai, the younger sister of Dnyaneshwar gave Changdev knowledge and made him her disciple. He wrote approx. 40 abhang's in glorification of Supreme Lord.



Sant Latif Shah

even though he was Muslim, but he was a staunch devotee of Ram. Muslims of that time did not tolerate this. They complained to Badshah (Muslim king). Badshah sent soldiers to bring him but he did not come so Badshah personally went to his home. That time Latif Shah was reading *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. In his house Lord's paintings were displayed. One of the painting showed Srimati Radharani was giving pan to Lord Krishna. Seeing that, Badshah disreputably asked while Krishna is given Vida (pan), then why isn't He eating.

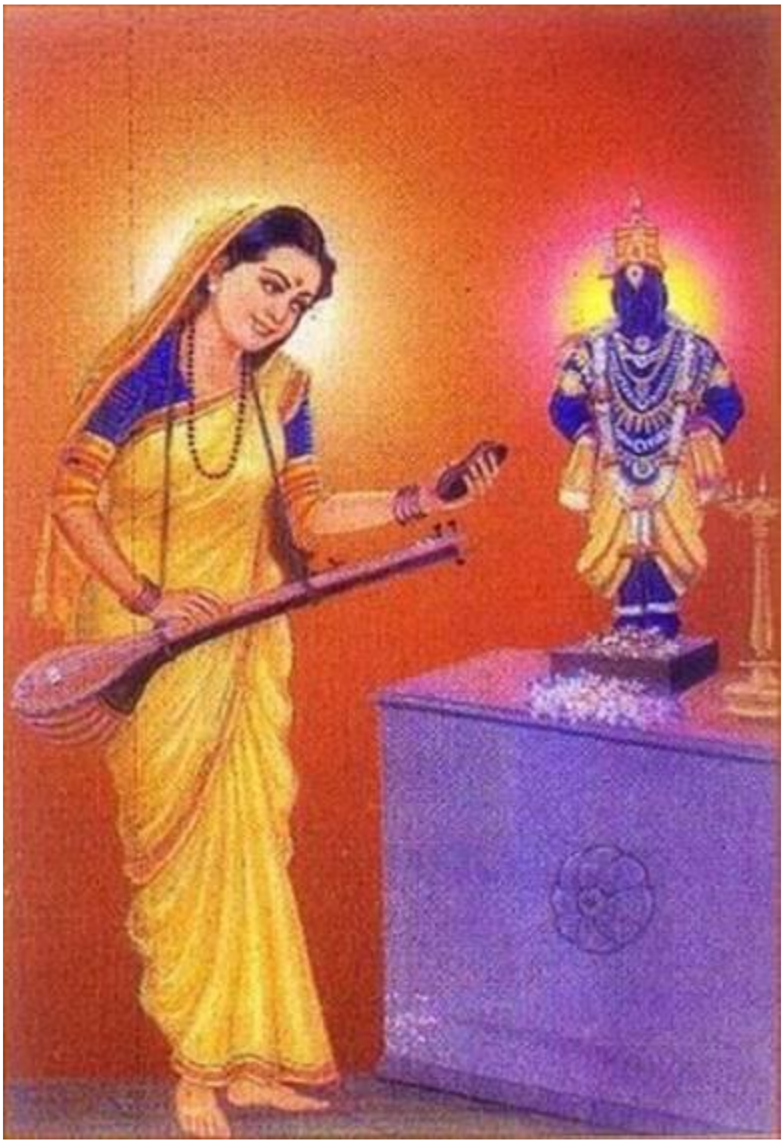
That time Latif Shah stood before Lord Krishna with folded hands and requested to eat Vida. Immediately King could see Krishna from the painting opened His mouth and ate Vida. Seeing this Badshah bowed down in front of Latif Shah.



Mira Bai

was a well renowned and staunch devotee of Lord Sri Krishna. Srila Prabhupada has written in his purport to *Srimad-Bhagavatam* 2.3.15:

"The celebrated Mira Bai was a staunch devotee of Lord Krishna as the great lifter of Govardhana Hill." (mere to Giridhar Gopal...). Mira Bai's devotion was exceptional and exemplary. Her devotional bhajans are famous amongst Vaishnavas.



Sant Kanhopatra



Significance of Asadhi Ekadasi

2. Taak Pithe Vithoba Temple

This temple is close to west gate of the main Vitthal temple. Long ago one old devoted lady of the name Ramabai stayed here. She had come here from Paithan on the order of

Lord himself. She would everyday serve Lord Vitthala in the main temple and only eat food which is offered to Lord. On the order of Lord, every day she would bring a special food item “Taak Pith” -Butter porridge and the Lord would relish it. As years went by Ramabai became old and could not come to temple. So Lord himself along with Rukmini Devi went and stayed in her house.

There Lord like a child would demand and relish her Taak Pith. When Ramabai’s health improved and she was able to go again, the Lord decided to return. At this time she requested the Lord Vitthala to stay permanently in her house. Agreeing with her, Lord decided to expand and stay here also. Even today during Ashadi Ekadashi when pilgrims can’t take darshan of the main deity due to huge crowds, they come here knowing well the non-difference.



Taak Pithe Vithoba Temple



Taak Pithe Vithoba Temple



Lord Vitthala and Rukmini at Taak Pithe Vithoba Temple

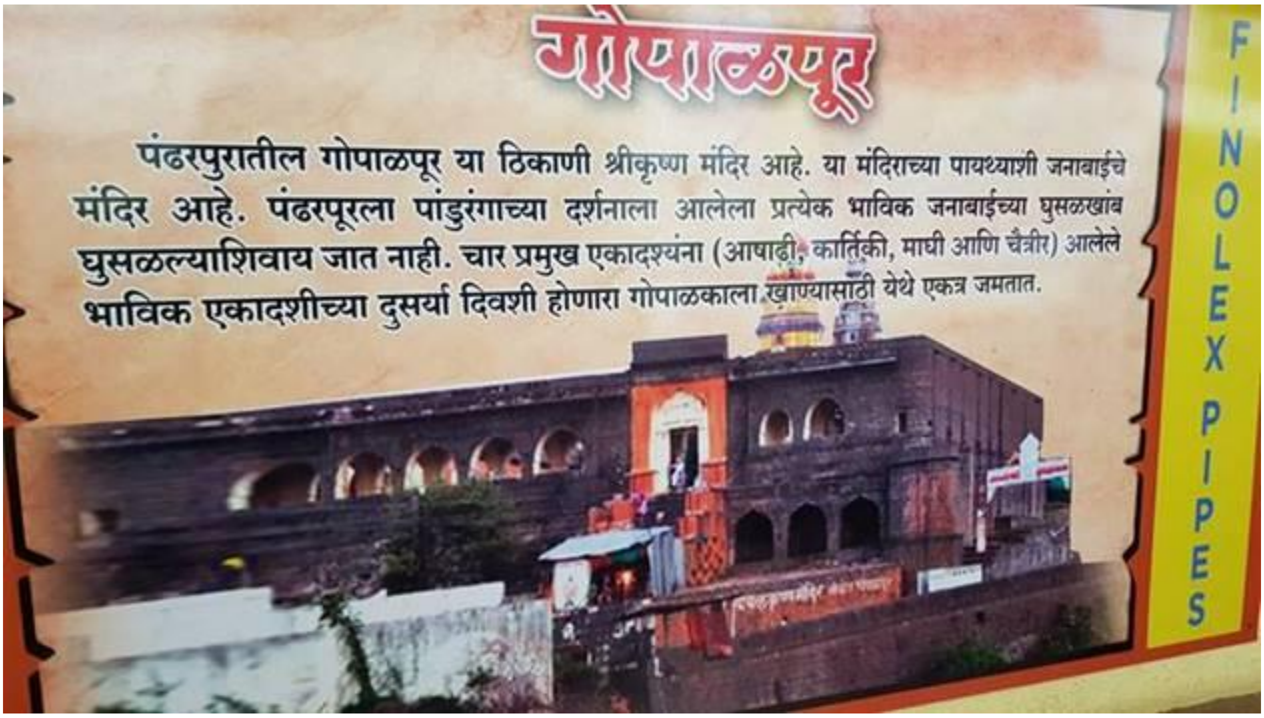


Taak Pithe Vithoba Temple

3. Gopalpur, Vishnupad and Narada Muni Temples

Gopalpur is a very important place to visit near Pandharpur and is non-different to Govardhana in Vraja. In this area, just on the banks of Chandrabhaga river is famous Vishnupad Temple. Vishnupad temple is in the middle of Chandrabhaga river and is assessable by a ramp. Vishnupad Temple bares the marks of footprints of Lord Krishna embedded on a stone slab along with the hoof prints of His beloved cows. In the middle of the river close-by is a small Narada Muni Temple. This Narada Muni Temple is the only temple in the world dedicated to Narada. Narada's temple is assessible by boat and is half sunk most of the time in the year with the streams of Chandrabhaga river. The whole area is in an exquisitely beautiful. Once Lord Krishna along with his cows came to visit Pandharpur. This past time is commemorated even today at Vishnupad Temple. Local devotees say that this place is Lord Krishna's eternal place of lunch pastime. Narada Muni's small temple demonstrates his every day's visit to witness this pastime! There is a Hanuman temple which also lies in Chandrabhaga river and is half sunk.

On the first day of Margashirsha month, Lord Vitthala's sandals are taken to Vishnupad temple. On the last day of the same month, Lord Vitthala's chariot is brought to the temple in a grand procession. Near Vishnupad temple is also the temple of Sant Jana Bhai, an adherent devotee of Lord Sri Krishna.



Gopalpur:

This is the temple of Lord Sri Krishna at Gopalpur in Pandharpur. At the base of the temple there is Janabai temple. All the devotees who visit Pandharpur to see Pandurang also visit Janabai's to churn churning rod. Devotees who come on 4 main Ekadashis (Aashadhi, Kartiki, Maghi, Chaitr), next day they gather to eat Gopalkala (yogurt poha prasad).



Gopalpur is 2.5km from Pandharpur



Vishnupad Temple in Gopalpur



Footprints of Lord Krishna embedded on a stone slab along with the hoof prints of His beloved cows



Narada Muni Temple in middle of Chandrabhaga River. This is the only Narada Muni Temple in the world.



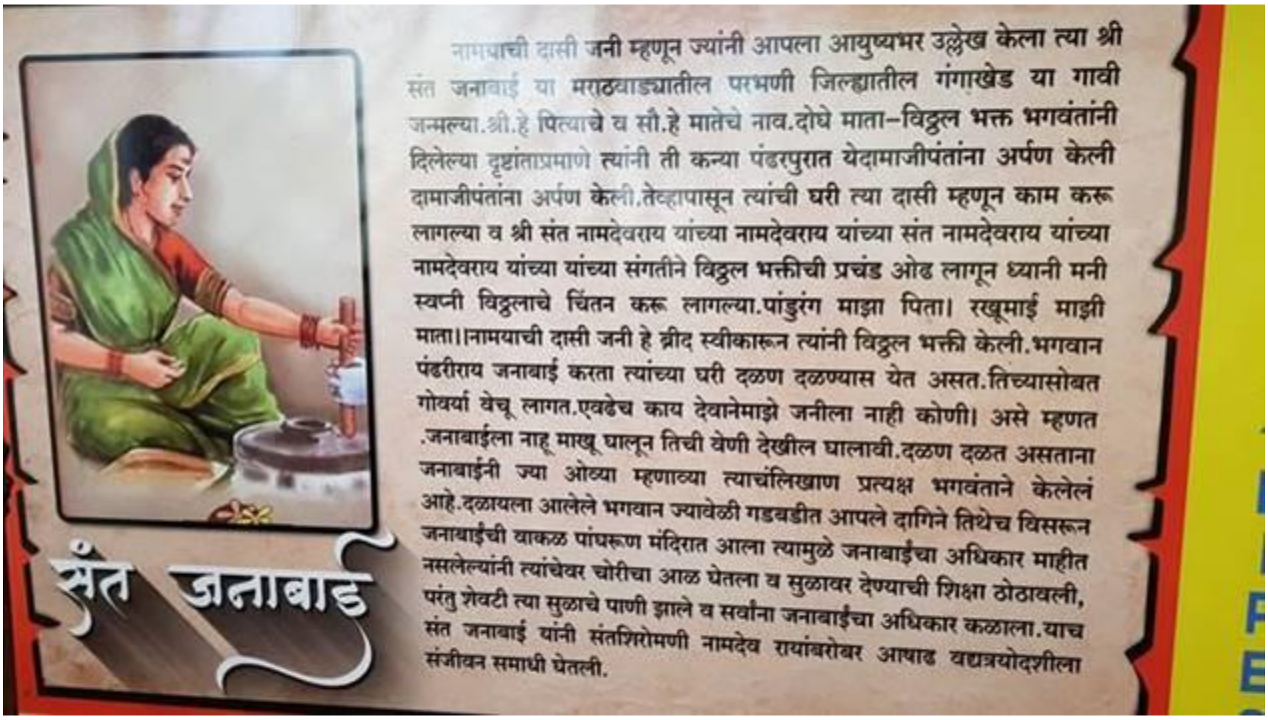
Hanuman Temple in middle of Chandrabhaga River



Entrance to Gopalpur Temple



Lord Sri Krishna at Gopalpur Temple



Saint Janabai

One who called herself as a servant of Saint Namdev that Saint Janabai was born in Marathwada of Parabhani district of Gangakhed village. Father's name Sri and mother's name Sau. Both devotees of Lord Vitthal as advised by Lord gave away their daughter to Damaji Pant. Since then she started working as a maid servant at their place. Due to the association of Saint Namdev she was immensely attracted to the devotional service of Vitthal and thus always within heart, mind and dream she was thinking of Lord Vitthal.

Pandurang my father|
Rakhumai my mother|
Servant of Namdev Jani |
Making this a slogan she performed Vitthal Bhakti.

Lord Vitthal used to come to their place to grind grain. Lord used to pick cow dung cake. Not only that but by saying Jani has no shelter Lord used to bathe Janabai and do her hair. While grinding the grains whatever verses Janabai said Lord wrote them personally. Once when Lord came to grind grains, in rush He forgot his jewellery there and came to temple wearing Janabai's rug. Those who did not know Janabai's great qualities they blamed her for stealing and gave hang to death punishment. When they were just about to hang her, hanging rope turned into Sri Vitthal and everyone understood her greatness.



Janabai and Lord Vitthal grinding grains together



Original utensils used for cooking by Janabai



Lord Vitthal picking pile of cow dung with Janabai



Original cooking stove of Janabai



Lord Vitthal Rukmini



Sant Janabai’s samadhi near Vishnupad Temple

4. ISKCON Pandharpur

At Pandharpur, International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) has a beautiful Temple located amidst lush agricultural fields and on the banks of Candrabhaga river. Their Lordships Sri Sri Radha Pandharinath are the presiding deities. Temple has Guesthouse facility, Matchless gift shop, Goshala and footprints of Lord Caitanya, Lord Nityananda and Visvarupa. On the temple premises there is Srila Prabhupada ghat constructed by ISKCON for the convenience of pilgrims to easily commute across the Candrabhaga river. In the month of Asadha (July), ISKCON Pandharpur temple does major contribution in distributing Prasadam to the pilgrims coming for Dindi procession. ISKCON Pandharpur also conducts Pandharpur Dhama parikrama.



ISKCON Sri Sri Radha Panduranga Temple, Pandharpur



ISKCON Pandharpur



ISKCON Pandharpur



Welcome to ISKCON Sri Sri Radha Panduranga Temple, Pandharpur



ISKCON Pandharpur



Their Lordships Sri Sri Radha Panduranga Temple, Pandharpur



Sri Vitthal Rukmini



Lord Caitanya in Pandharpur

Lord Caitanya visited Pandharpur while on His journey through South India He stayed here for 11 days. Sri Caitanya Caritamrta Madhya-lila chapter 9 verses 282–283 and 9.300-303 describe Lord Caitanya’s visit to Pandharpur.



Lord Caitanya in Pandharpur



Devotees listening to pastimes of Lord at ISKCON Pandharpur



His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

Founder-acarya of International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON)



Footprints of Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu, Nityananda Prabhu and Visvarup at a beautiful park inside ISKCON Pandharpur temple



Footprints of Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu, Nityananda Prabhu and Visvarup



Footprints of Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu, Nityananda Prabhu and Visvarup



Meeting of Nityananda Prabhu with Laxmipati at Pandharpur

Lord Nityananda also visited Pandharpur and met Laksmipati here as described in Sri Bhakti-ratnakara 5.2241-2328 by Narahari Chakravarti Thakur.



Sri Sri Radha Panduranga Goshala at ISKCON Pandharpur



Lord Krishna's beloved cows at ISKCON Pandharpur Goshala



Flower and vegetable gardens at ISKCON Pandharpur



Govinda's restaurant at ISKCON Pandharpur

5. Chandrabhaga River

Skanda Purana narrates this story of Lord Siva's fight with Tripurasur. Once Tripurasur was causing havoc in all three worlds. Lord Siva fought valiantly and killed Tripurasur. While killing him, Lord Siva perspired heavily. His perspiration took the form of a river and traversed the earth planet causing flood. When this flood reached Pandharpur the residents became fearful and prayed to Bhairav who is the guardian of this holly place. Lord became angry on river and was about to destroy it. The river in turn prayed to Lord Vitthal for protection. Lord Vitthal assured her protection and allowed her to flow through Pandharpur, but without making any noise. This river is none other than river Bhima and because she half circumnutates Pandharpur like half-moon, hence here she is also known as Chandrabhaga.



Chandrabhaga

In Varakari sampradaya, Chandrabhaga has been given a lot of importance. 'First bathe in Chandrabhaga then listen Bhagavan katha then Vithhal Darshan after that.' Lord asked Sant Tukaram, what do you want, ask Me whatever you want. Then Tukaram said, *"Lord I*

do not want anything but I wish bathe in Chandrabhaga." Such is the close relationship of Chandrabhaga and Varakari sampradaya.



Chandrabhaga

6. Sri Dwarkadisha Temple, Pandharpur

Sri Dwarkadisha Temple is close to Chandrabhaga river and Sri Vitthala Temple. Sri Dwarkadisha grace everyone with His beautiful darshans and blessings upon everyone.



Sri Dwarkadisha Temple, Pandharpur



Sri Dwarkadisha

7. Mallikarjun Temple

This pastime is even before Lord Vitthala came here. Once a great demon of the name Dindirav started troubling all directions after gaining blessings from demigods. All the demigods pleaded to Lord Vishnu for help. Lord Vishnu appeared as Mallikarjun, the son of king Shri Chandra. Shri Chandra performed *tapasya* to Lord Siva wanting to have a son like Lord Vishnu. In answer to his prayers Lord Vishnu came as child Mallikarjun. At the age of 20, Lord came to this forest for hunting and was challenged by demon Dindirav. The fight lasted for 1000 years. Lord then took a mace of iron rod (*loha danda*) and hit demon on head. While dying demon chanted unknowingly "Hari Hari". Being pleased with him, Lord asked him to ask for a benediction.

Dindirava demon asked, "since I was killed by an iron rod (Loha danda), let this place be called as Lohadanda Tirtha, and this forest gets my name as Dindiravan."

8. Sri Krishna Temple

Sri Krishna Temple is on the main road about 300 meters on the way to Lord Vitthala Temple.

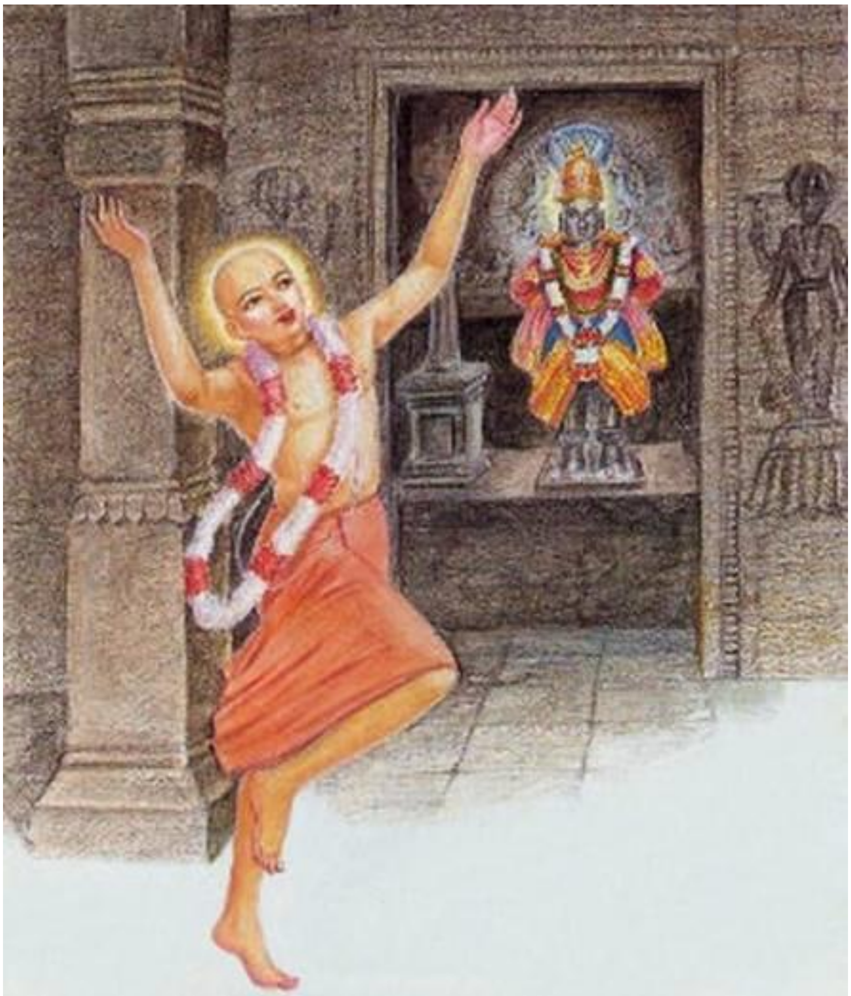


Sri Krishna Temple in Pandharpur



Lord Sri Krishna

Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu’s Visit to Pandharpur



Lord Caitanya visited Pandharpur while on a journey through South India, apparently to search for His *sannyasi* brother, Sankararanya, formerly known as Visvarupa. After traveling down the east coast of India through the province of Tamil Nadu and up the west coast through Kerala and Karnataka, Caitanya Mahaprabhu entered Maharashtra. As stated in the *Caitanya Caritamrta (Madhya 9.282–283 and 9.300-303)*, the Lord went to Pandharpur, where He happily saw the Deity of Lord Vitthala and chanted and danced.

In Pandharpur Lord Caitanya met Sri Ranga Puri, a Godbrother of His spiritual master, Isvara Puri. They talked about Lord Krishna continuously for five to seven days. Sri Ranga Puri recalled that he had once been to Navadvipa, Lord Caitanya's birthplace, where he had visited the house of a brahmana named Jagannatha Misra. Sri Ranga Puri remembered the taste of a curry cooked from banana flowers by Jagannatha Misra's wife. Jagannatha Misra's eldest son had accepted the renounced order. Sri Ranga Puri had later learned, he said, that this son had passed away in Pandharpur. Lord Caitanya then revealed, that Jagannatha Misra had been His father, and the son who had passed away had been His brother.

Lord Caitanya stayed four more days in Pandharpur, before moving on. During His tour of South India, Lord Caitanya was constantly on the move, but He stayed in Pandharpur for about eleven days. His pastimes there, and those of His brother, establish yet another link between Pandharpur and the Gaudiya Vaisnava tradition followed by the present-day Hare Krishna devotees.

In *Sri Caitanya Caritamrta Madhya Lila*, Chapter 9, we read about Lord Caitanya's visit to a famous Krishna temple in Maharashtra state:

Madhya 9.282
tatha haite pandarapure aila gauracandra
viththala-thakura dekhi' paila ananda

"From there Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu went to Pandharpur, where He happily saw the temple of Vitthala Thakura."

Purport: The city of Pandharpur is situated on the river Bhima. It is said that Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu initiated Tukarama when He visited Pandarapura, and thus Tukarama became His disciple. Tukarama Acarya became very famous in the Maharashtra province, and he spread the sankirtana movement all over the province. The sankirtana party belonging to Tukarama is still very popular in Bombay and throughout the province of Maharashtra. Tukarama's book is known as Abhanga. His sankirtana party exactly resembles the Gaudiya-Vaishnava sankirtana parties, for they chant the holy name of the Lord with mridanga and karatalas.

Later in Madhya Lila 9, we find further information about Lord Caitanya's association with Pandarapura, this time in relationship with His brother Vishvarupa:

Madhya 9.300
ei tirthe sankararanyera siddhi-prapti haila
prastave sri-ranga-puri eteka kahila

"Sri Ranga Puri informed Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu that the sannyasi named Sankararanya had attained perfection in that holy place, Pandarapura.

Purport: Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's elder brother was named Visvarupa. He left home before Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and accepted the sannyasa order under the name of Sankararanya Svami. He travelled all over the country and finally went to Pandharpur, where he passed away after attaining perfection. In other words, he entered the spiritual world after giving up his mortal body at Pandharpur. Sri Ranga Puri, a disciple of Sri Madhavendra Puri and godbrother of Isvara Puri, disclosed this important news to Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu.

Madhya 9.301
prabhu kahe, purvasrame tenha mora bhrata
jagannatha misra purvasrame mora pita

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu said, "In My previous asrama, Sankararanya was My brother and Jagannatha Misra was My father."

Madhya 9.302
ei-mata dui-jane ista-gosthi kari'
dvaraka dekhite calila sri-ranga-puri

After finishing his talks with Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, Sri Ranga Puri started for Dvaraka-dhama.

Madhya 9.303
dina cari tatha prabhuke rakhila brahmana
bhima-nadi snana kari' karena viththala darsana

After Sri Ranga Puri departed for Dwarika, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu remained with the brahmana at Pandarapura for four more days. He took His bath in the Bhima River and visited the temple of Vitthala."

Directions to reach Pandharpur:

Pandharpur is 400 km southeast of Mumbai and 216 km (4 hours' drive) from Pune in the Solapur district. From Pune airport, one can hire a taxi to go to Pandharpur.



Pandharpur Dhama Parikrama organized by ISKCON Pandharpur

Sri Vitthal Rukmini Temple online darshans:
http://www.vitthalrukminimandir.org/English/onlineDarshan1.html

Lord Caitanya's visit to Pandharpur: http://vedabase.com/cc/madhya/9/282/

ISKCON Pandharpur: http://iskconpandharpur.com/
https://www.facebook.com/1383319408423863/videos/1384242208331583/

Tukaram's Dehu Dhama and Pune Yatra: http://www.dandavats.com/?p=53814

Sant Janabai movie (Hindi): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3wPo62bsdUQ

Sant Sakhubai movie (Hindi): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sGRu7Bb_OsQ

Sant Gora Kumbhar movie (Hindi): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IVKjIY7BJO8

Sant Namdev movie (Hindi): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=scBGgvHX314

Sant Eknath movie (Hindi): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BJqUXBnjIyg

Sant Kanhopatra movie (Hindi): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RWcWKOiF6Cg

Sant Satva Mali movie (Hindi): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kqsKEdZXQXE

Mayapur TV: http://Mayapur.tv / **Vrindavana TV:** http://Vrindavana.tv

Holy Pilgrimages: www.Holy-Pilgrimages.com / **Facebook:** www.facebook.com/HolyPilgrimages
Holy Dham: www.HolyDham.com

Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare |
Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare ||